

# SPICE IT UP

In his latest book, Rick Stein takes a passage to India to explore the country's vibrant food and learn the art of making a standout curry

RECIPES RICK STEIN PHOTOGRAPHY JAMES MURPHY



Madras fish curry of snapper, tomato & tamarind

“This curry is fragrant with coriander and cloves, sour with the tomato and taramind, and fiery with red chilli” Rick Stein

## Madras fish curry of snapper, tomato & tamarind

Serves 4 - 6

I have often written about finding this curry, which I have nominated as my favourite. I've used the same fish it was cooked with on that day in Mamallapuram - snapper - but I recommend using any of the following: filleted bass, preferably a large fish, because although you'll get softer flesh it has plenty of flavour, or gurnard. I think more than anything else that this dish typifies what I was saying about really fresh fish not being ruined by a spicy curry. I can still remember the slightly oily flavour of the exquisite snapper in that dish because fish oil, when it's perfectly fresh, is very nice to eat. I always think oily fish goes well with curry anyway, particularly with the flavours of tomatoes, tamarind and curry leaves.

- 60ml vegetable oil
- 1 tbsp yellow mustard seeds
- 1 large onion, finely chopped
- 3 garlic cloves, finely crushed
- 30 fresh curry leaves
- 2 tsp Kashmiri chilli powder
- 2 tsp ground coriander
- 2 tsp turmeric
- 400g can chopped tomatoes
- 100ml tamarind liquid\*
- 2 green chillies, each sliced lengthways into 6 pieces, with seeds
- 1 tsp salt
- 700g snapper fillets, cut into 5cm chunks
- Boiled basmati rice, to serve

Heat the oil in a heavy-based saucepan or karahi over a medium heat. When hot, add the mustard seeds and fry for 30 seconds, then stir in the onion and garlic and fry gently for about 10 minutes until softened and lightly golden. Add the curry leaves, chilli powder, coriander and turmeric and fry for 2 minutes, then stir in the tomatoes, tamarind liquid, green chillies and salt and simmer for about 10 minutes until rich and reduced. Add the fish, cook for a further 5 minutes or until just cooked through, and serve with plain rice.

\* For the tamarind liquid, put 60g tamarind pulp in a bowl with 120ml just-boiled water. Leave for 15 minutes, work the paste with your fingers then strain and discard the seeds and fibrous material.

## Prawn fritters

Serves 4

I couldn't work out why these prawn fritters were so delicious; there seemed to be nothing to them, just a simple batter, a bit of lemon, some onion rings and a bottle of mustard sauce. They may have put a secret ingredient in the batter, but I expect the success lies in using chickpea flour and frying the battered prawns in pure ghee. I consumed a few plates of them while having a thoroughly enjoyable conversation about the almost infinite possibilities of street food in that city. Later I woke up in the middle of the night in my hotel with my head spinning, thinking the pace of life was so frenetic that I was surely locked into a madhouse, albeit with some of the tastiest food I've ever found. This makes a quite soft batter, not a thick, crisp batter like you'd get with fish and chips.

12 extra large unpeeled raw prawns

### Batter

- 60g plain flour
- 60g chickpea flour
- ¼ tsp salt
- 1 free-range egg
- 150ml-225ml water
- 70g ghee, for frying
- Lemon wedges, mustard chutney and hot tomato chutney to serve

To prepare the prawns, pull off the head and peel away the shell, leaving the tail intact. Use a small, sharp knife to run down the back of the prawns and pull out the black intestinal tracts, if visible. Then use the knife to cut almost all the way through the prawns and butterfly them open. Flatten them out a little with the palm of your hand. Pat dry with kitchen towel.

For the batter, mix the flours and salt together, whisk in the egg and enough of

## “When Indians talk of food, they talk about their life” Rick Stein, chef and author

the water to give the smooth batter the consistency of single cream.

Heat the ghee in a heavy-based saucepan or karahi over a medium heat. Once hot, dip 2 or 3 prawns in the batter and carefully lower into the ghee. Fry for 2-3 minutes, turning once, until crisp and golden and cooked through. Drain on kitchen paper. Repeat with the remaining prawns. Serve with lemon wedges to squeeze over and chutney on the side.

## Dry curry of cabbage, carrot & coconut

Serves 4 - 6

Thorani is a dry vegetable curry from Kerala made from whatever fresh produce is around - snake beans, unripe jack fruit, sag (leafy vegetables), even green tomatoes. Taking a very common and normally in-season vegetable in the UK, like cabbage, I've worked on this dish to produce my own version, which means I've kept faithful to the essential ingredients of mustard seeds, green chillies, ginger and, above all, grated coconut, but I have made the dish as quick as possible to produce.

- 3 tbsp coconut oil or vegetable oil
- 2 tsp black mustard seeds
- 2 tsp fresh curry leaves
- 1 tsp cumin seeds
- 2 dried Kashmiri chillies, each broken into 3 or 4 pieces
- 6cm ginger, finely grated into a paste
- ½ tsp turmeric
- 1 tsp salt
- ½ tsp coarsely ground black pepper
- 250g hispi or pointed spring cabbage (or spring greens), shredded into 5mm pieces
- 2 carrots, diced
- 2 fresh green chillies, sliced into thin rounds, with seeds
- 100g fresh or frozen coconut flesh, blitzed in a food processor or grated
- Boiled basmati rice and pappadums, to serve

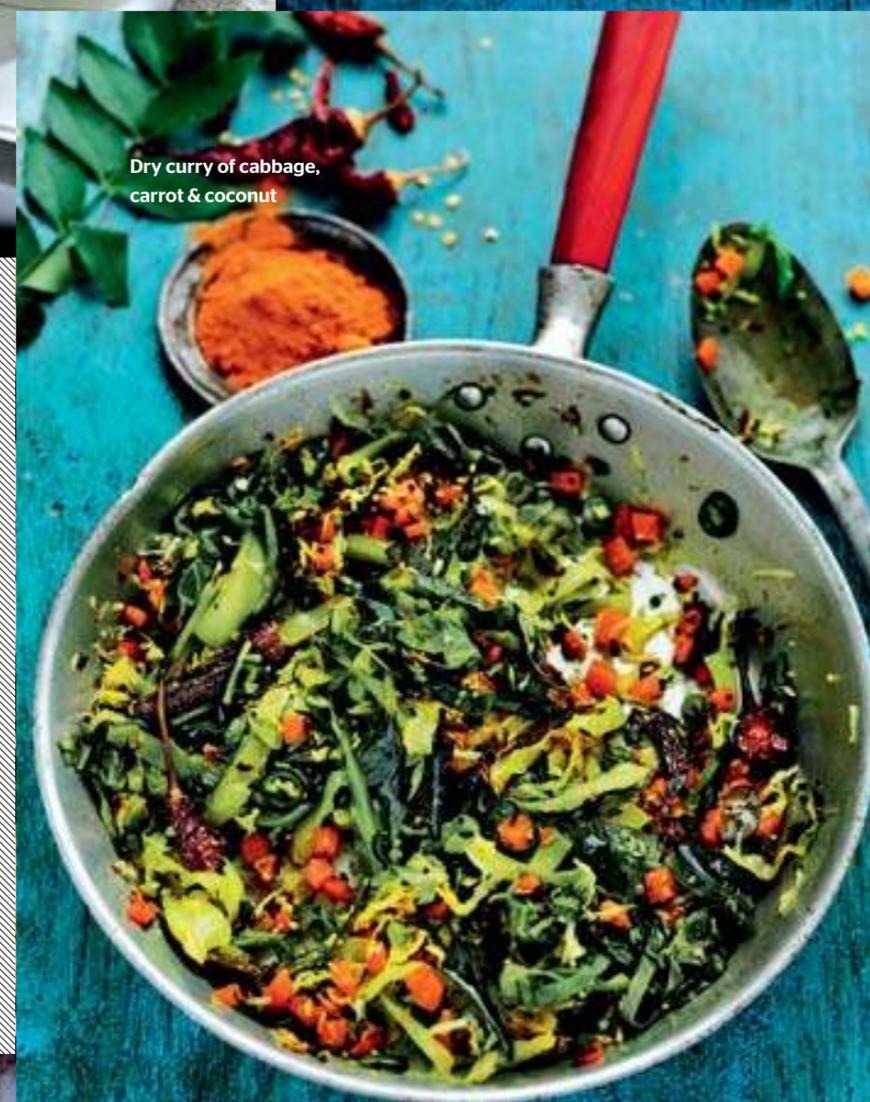
Heat the oil in a heavy-based saucepan or karahi set over a medium heat, and when hot, add the mustard seeds followed by the curry leaves, cumin seeds and dried chillies.

Stir for about 30 seconds, then add the ginger paste, turmeric, salt and black pepper and fry for 30 seconds. Stir in the cabbage and carrots and cook, covered, over a medium heat for 5-7 minutes or until the vegetables are tender, adding a splash of water if they start to stick to the pan.

Stir in the green chillies and coconut, heat through for a minute and serve. Serve with rice and pappadums. ❖



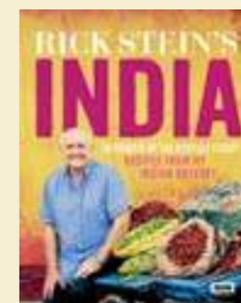
Prawn fritters



Dry curry of cabbage, carrot & coconut



“The search for the perfect curry was a quest to understand Indian food in all its complexities”



Edited extract from the book *Rick Stein's India* by Rick Stein (\$49.95, Ebury Press/Random House).

### write in to win

You could win one of four copies of the book, worth \$49.95 each, by answering this question (25 words or fewer, please): “What part of India would you like to visit and why?”

**TO ENTER** Send entries (with your contact details) to ‘Rick Stein’s India’ competition, Locked Bag 5030, Alexandria NSW 2015, or email [insideout@newsldt.com.au](mailto:insideout@newsldt.com.au).

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